

# Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails Project

## FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2012-0028-EA

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October 2013



It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 2007 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Sierra Front Field Office and the Carson Valley Trails Association (CVTA) entered into discussions about the opportunities for non-motorized trails in the Pine Nut Mountains, located in Douglas, and Carson City Counties. The Pine Nut Mountains, east of Carson City and the Minden/Gardnerville area of western Nevada, consists of approximately 400,000 acres of public lands, private lands, and Indian Trust Lands. Although there are extensive routes throughout the area ranging from single track trails to maintained dirt roads, no designated non-motorized trails exist within the Pine Nut Mountains.

In October of 2010 the CVTA submitted a proposal to the BLM for a 45-mile trail system, running from the area of Ruhenstroth Dam near Highway 395, north to Hot Springs Mountain. The non-motorized trail system would have included up to four possible loop trails, and one connecting trail, the Carson Valley Discovery Trail, running north to south along the western edge of the Pine Nut Mountains. The trail would have been developed with opportunities to connect to non-motorized trails on Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (USFS) lands to the southwest and lands owned by the City of Carson to the north. Through the scoping process and in consideration of public comments, in April of 2013 the Project was revised into two loop trails, approximately six miles each, and the name was changed to the *Juniper* and *Pinyon Loop Trails Project* (Project) (Figure 1). The entire Project area is located in Douglas County.

The CVTA, based in Minden, Nevada, is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that works with partners to provide opportunities for non-motorized recreation for the public. The CVTA currently maintains the Fay-Luther Trail System on public lands in Alpine County, California. Fay-Luther is one of the most popular and heavily used trail systems in the Sierra Front. The CVTA has worked with the Nevada Conservation Corps and Professional Trail Builders Association on past projects, and these groups may assist with implementation of this Project.

Douglas County has identified outdoor recreation as a major amenity for strategic development in the County's future. Outdoor recreation and designated trails are consistently mentioned as a top attraction from community members and organizations. The proposed Project would create strong community character and pride, provide a local and inexpensive recreational trail resource, increase and diversify community marketability, and improve the overall quality of life. Local volunteers would help construct much of this Project. The CVTA would use locally donated funds for trail signage and trailhead amenities, and possibly seek out additional human resources and funding for construction through various trail grant programs. Under the Federal Land Management Policy Act (FLPMA), the BLM has a mandate to provide for multiple uses, including opportunities for the public to use non-motorized trails.

This final environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the applicable Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), Department of Interior NEPA regulations at 43 CFR Part 46 (October 2008), and in accordance with the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) (BLM 2008). In addition, the BLM has signed a Finding of No Significant Impact, therefore an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. Upon

issuance of a Decision for this Project, the BLM would enter into a long-term agreement with the CVTA for trail and trailhead maintenance<sup>1</sup>.

### **1.1 Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the Project is for the BLM to authorize the construction and maintenance of the *Juniper* and *Pinyon Loop Trails* and Pinyon Loop Trailhead East by the CVTA. The need for the Project is to respond to a request by CVTA to provide for non-motorized recreation opportunities on public lands. Consistent with the multiple use mandate of FLPMA, the need for the project is to meet BLM's requirement to provide for a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

### **1.2 Scoping and Issues Identification**

On October 25, 2010, the original project was evaluated by the BLM's interdisciplinary team. Issues that were raised during the review included:

- Are there BLM sensitive plant species in the project area? Can potential impacts to them be minimized?
- Are there Native American religious uses in the project area and concerns about potential impacts?
- How would the non-motorized trail be designed that would limit opportunities for unauthorized use by motorized vehicles?

In July of 2012 the BLM and CVTA executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlined the respective financial and other responsibilities for the Project authorization, including the need to comply with the NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). On October 25, 2012, the BLM announced a 30-day public scoping period for the original project. Letters and a project map were sent to approximately 72 residents adjacent to the project area, information was published on the project's website, and a news release was issued. The CVTA also announced the project on the organizations website and through their mailing list. Articles for this scoping appeared on KTNV Channel 2 – Reno (web version) on October 25, 2012, in the *Reno-Gazette Journal* on November 1, 2012, and *The Record-Courier* on November 4, 2012.

The BLM presented the project to the Douglas County Commissioners on November 1, 2012. A workshop was held on November 14, 2012 at the Pinon Hill Elementary School. Approximately 120 people were in attendance. Sixty-one comments were submitted to the BLM. The public scoping period ended on November 25, 2012. The BLM also made presentations to the Carson City Open Space Committee on December 4, 2012, and to the Carson City Board of Supervisors on December 6, 2012.

Between January and April 2013 revisions were made to the project, changing the proposal from a 45-mile non-motorized trail system into two, six-mile non-motorized loop trails. On May 13, 2013 the BLM announced a 15-day public scoping period for the revised Project. Letters were sent to 118 residents adjacent to the Project area, and information was published on the Project's website. The BLM conducted a workshop for the public at the Carson City District Office on

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<sup>1</sup> The agreement would include the upkeep and repairs needed to the trails caused by weather, tree fall and any unauthorized motorized vehicle use. The agreement would also require CVTA to maintain and replace trail signs if vandalized, and remove any litter at both the trailhead and along the loop trails.

May 16, 2013. Eight people were in attendance. The BLM issued a news release on May 22, 2013. An article for this scoping appeared on KTNV Channel 2 – Reno (web version) and *This Is Reno* (web version) on May 22, 2013 and in *The Record-Courier* on May 24, 2013. The BLM made a presentation to the Douglas County Commissioners on June 6, 2013. The scoping period for the revised Project was extended for a total of 30-days until June 11, 2013. Twelve comments were submitted to the BLM.

### **1.3 Land Use Plan Conformance Statement**

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (CRMP), May 2001, page REC-2, RMP Level Decisions, Desired Outcomes #1:

- “Provide a wide range of quality recreation opportunities on public lands under management by the Carson City Field Office [now known as the Carson City District Office].”

### **1.4 Decision To Be Made**

The Authorized Officer would decide whether to authorize the construction and maintenance of *Juniper* and/or *Pinyon Loop Trails* by the CVTA on BLM-managed lands. The Authorized Officer would also decide the specific location for the trailhead for the Pinyon Loop Trail.

### **1.5 Relationship Statutes, Regulations, and Other Plans**

The Proposed Action and Alternatives are consistent with the following documents:

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976;
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969;
- National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470f), implemented through the State Protocol Agreement between BLM Nevada and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office for Implementing the National Historic Preservation Act (2012) under the provisions of the National Programmatic Agreement between the BLM and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; and
- Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments – EO 13175.

## 2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### 2.1 Alternative A: Proposed Action

#### Loop Trails

Under the Proposed Action, two non-motorized loop trails would be constructed and maintained by the CVTA. The Juniper Loop Trail is located in T14N, R 20E, Sections 25, 26, 35 and 36 of the McTarnahan Hill, Nevada USGS 7.5 minute quad (Figure 2). The trail would be approximately 6.6 miles in length. The Pinyon Loop Trail is located at T12N, R21E, Sections 9, 10, 14 and 15 of the Mt. Siegel, Nevada USGS 7.5 minute quad. The trail would be approximately 4.6 miles in length (Figure 3). Table 1 provides a comparison of the two loop trails.

**Table 1. Comparison of the Two Loop Trails**

Feature	Juniper Loop Trail	Pinyon Loop Trail
<b>Trailhead</b>	Existing trailhead on gravel road, ½ mile from Stephanie Way; accommodates vehicles with horse trailers.	Would require construction; design would be similar to that at Stephanie Way to accommodate vehicles with horse trailers.
<b>Trail Difficulty</b>	Average 5 percent grade and distance 6-7 miles consisting of stacked trail loops.	Average 5 percent grade and distance 4.6 miles consisting of stacked trail loops.
<b>Terrain</b>	Elevation range from 5,100 to 5,400 feet above sea level (asl); may make trail construction easier.	Elevation range from 5,400 to 6,100 feet asl; may be slightly more difficult than Juniper Loop.
<b>Resource Impacts</b>	Removal of trees would be avoided; approximately two acres of surface disturbance would occur. Less than ½ acre of vegetative material would be removed.	Removal of trees would be avoided; approximately two acres of surface disturbance would occur. Less than ½ acre of vegetative material would be removed.
<b>Opportunities for Solitude</b>	Moderate	High
<b>Proximity to Urban Population</b>	Close to larger, denser population base on Stephanie Way and Johnson Lanes.	Greater distance from large population base.
<b>Scenery</b>	Provides opportunities for panoramic views.	Provides opportunities for panoramic views.
<b>Proximity to Motorized Uses</b>	Crosses five to six roads and five user-created motorcycle routes.	Crosses five user-created motorcycle/ATV routes.

#### Implementation in Phases

The CVTA would construct the two loop trails in phases based on the availability of funding, volunteers, level of trail construction complexity, and weather. Construction of the *Juniper* and *Pinyon Loop Trails* would likely begin in the fall of 2014 and continue until completion in approximately four years. Although most of the area is not subject to large accumulations of snow, most work is anticipated to occur between fall and spring each year to avoid work in high temperatures. Actual implementation would depend on CVTA funding, volunteer resources and other trail projects.



## Trailheads

Juniper Loop Trail – the existing gravel staging area off of Stephanie Way would be utilized. No changes to the parking capacity would be needed as it had been designed by the BLM as a pull through for vehicles with horse trailers. One or two information signs or kiosk would be installed to provide information on the trail and *Leave No Trace* principles.

Pinyon Loop Trail – there is no existing staging area for this loop trail. The design of the staging area would be similar to that off of Stephanie Way (to accommodate vehicles with horse trailers). The BLM has evaluated two locations, one on Pine Nut Road (preferred location) (approximately 1¼ miles east of the intersection of Pine Nut Road and Wheaton Lane) (Figure 4); the second near the intersection of Ott Way/Blue Bird Drive/Out-R-Way. One or two information signs or kiosk would be installed to provide information on the trail and *Leave No Trace* principles.

A staging area was considered on the south side of the Pine Nut Road, however, there is a safety concern about a staging area being constructed on the opposite side of the road from the trailhead, which would require individuals to cross traffic, and there is an existing right-of-way to a private residence that the staging area would be in conflict with.

A staging area was considered west of Out-R-Way, however, there is a safety concern about a staging area being constructed on the opposite side of the road from the trailhead, which would require individuals to cross traffic.

Table 2 provides a comparison of the two trailhead options considered for the Pinyon Loop Trail. The two trailheads are shown in Figure 3. For the trailhead west location, several designs were considered by the BLM (Figures 5-9).

**Table 2. Comparison of the Two Trailheads**

Feature	Trailhead West	Trailhead East (Preferred)
<b>Proximity to Residences</b>	Closer to higher density of residences on Old Ranch and Blue Bird Roads.	Distant from high density of residences.
<b>Road Access</b>	Could be tied into a paved road (Out-R-Way). Ott Way would require up to 700 feet of ¾ inch minus Type II road base to improve for year round use.	Pine Nut Road is not paved. During the winter months road conditions may be poor.
<b>Visibility</b>	Depending on location, juniper trees would provide some visual barrier to the parking area.	Would be highly visible from Pine Nut Road.
<b>Trailhead Security</b>	Higher due to the adjacent paved Out-R-Way Road, a less remote location.	Lower due to a more remote location along Pine Nut Road.
<b>Distance from Trailhead to Primary Loop</b>	Two miles.	0.6 mile.
<b>Resource Conflicts</b>	No historic properties present.	No historic properties present.

Trail amenities would be similar to the Fay-Luther and Genoa Trail System Trailheads in Carson Valley. Both trailheads would be primitive in nature; there would be no restroom facilities. There would be no trash receptacles; users would be responsible for removal of their own trash.

## **Trail Construction**

Trail construction may occur by hand (preferred method) or machine depending on the specific project location, topographic and environmental constraints, and the availability of CVTA and grant funds. The CVTA trail building crews (volunteers) would be used to the greatest extent possible. A member of the Professional Trail Builders Association may also be hired to construct portions of the trail system by machine, utilizing equipment such as the Sutter 300 Single-Track Mini Trail Dozer. The trails would be 24-30 inches wide.

Trail building done by hand would involve basic and simple tools such as picnics and McLeod's. If trail machines are used, simple full bench construction using blade and backslope board would occur. No soil fill materials or any non-native materials would need to be imported. Regulatory, educational and directional signage would also be installed as an important part of trailside amenities.

No soils would be imported during trail construction. As a result of trail construction there would be less than two acres of surface disturbance. Removal of trees would be avoided and removal of sagebrush would be minimized.

## **Pinyon Loop Trailhead East (Preferred) Construction**

The new trailhead would be approximately 400-500 feet in length and 20-35 feet in width. Trailhead construction would include use of heavy equipment (e.g. front end loader, bulldozer, road grader) to remove the existing vegetative material and level the ground. No soil fill materials would need to be imported, however, an all-weather surface such as a ¾ inch minus Type II road base may be used to stabilize the parking area, and minimize opportunities for dust and soil erosion. To deter vehicles from traveling off-road, rocks, barriers or bollards may be placed along the perimeter of the parking area. A kiosk with regulatory, educational and directional signage would be installed and would be an important part of the trailhead amenities. As a result of trailhead construction, there would be less than one acre of permanent surface disturbance.

## **Trailhead Signage**

Upon completion of the loop trails, informational, directional and regulatory signs would be installed along strategic sections of the loop trails. Additional signage along access roads may be necessary to direct the public to the trailheads. Any encroachment permit necessary would be the responsibility of CVTA to obtain.

## **Trail and Trailhead Maintenance**

The new trail system would be maintained by the CVTA. Trail construction would adhere to the highest standards of sustainability incorporating minimal grades, grade reversals and regular drainage. Properly built trails would ensure a minimal amount of future maintenance and prevent excessive damage when trespass occurs from motorized use.

Regular inspections would occur by the CVTA to improve areas needing maintenance. Occasional log outs would occur from fallen juniper and pinyon pine trees.

### **Pinyon Loop Trail - Private Land Component**

A portion of the Project area (Pinyon Loop) crosses through privately-owned lands (Bently properties). Although there is a federal nexus to these lands, CVTA has the sole responsibility for securing access to construct that portion of the Pinyon Loop on privately-owned lands. CVTA or Douglas County may enter into an easement or other agreement. If no agreement is made, that portion of the trail would not be constructed, instead an alternate portion on public lands would be built. Bently properties provided the CVTA with the authorization to conduct all clearances necessary for this analysis.

### **Designation of Non-Motorized Trails/No Overnight Use of Trailheads**

This Project is to construct and maintain two non-motorized loop trails on the west side of the Pine Nut Mountains. The existing Travel Management Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) designation for this area is “open<sup>2</sup>” (BLM 2001). A revision to the CRMP is underway and the travel status in the Project area may change in the future (see Section 5.0). In the interim, the BLM has determined that it is necessary to issue a restriction order to limit use of these new loop trails to non-motorized only (hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding). A permanent designation of the two non-motorized trails would occur upon approval of a Travel Management Plan. In addition, both the Pinyon Loop and Juniper Loop trailheads would be designated as “no overnight use.” This is necessary to prevent camping activities at the trailheads which are not designed for this purpose.

OHV staging and target shooting (from and into the trailheads) would also be prohibited, as the Project would not be designed for this purpose and would be incompatible with public safety. This EA provides the analysis necessary for this order, which would be published in the *Federal Register (FR)*, per BLM Instructional Memorandum (IM) No. 2010-008, Change 1. The authority for this order is found at 43 CFR 8364.1. The restriction order would apply to the following sections of the McTarnahan Hill, Nevada USGS 7.5 minute quad:

Pinyon Loop – Trailhead East: T12N R21E, Section 14.

Juniper Loop – T14N 20E, Section 26 and T14N 20E, Section 35.

Final information on the area included in the restriction order would be published in the *Federal Register* notice. This restriction order would have no effect on motorized routes that cross the non-motorized trails.

### **Tiering**

This final EA includes site-specific analysis for the authorization of two loop trails and one new trailhead. The BLM may consider any future proposals for modification or additions to the loop trails through tiering. Under this process, the BLM would first evaluate the modification or addition under the NHPA, conduct any biological or cultural surveys, provide an opportunity for public involvement, then issue a supplemental EA or Determination of NEPA Adequacy (BLM 2008).

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<sup>2</sup> BLM Manual 1626, Travel and Transportation, defines *open* as “motorized vehicle travel is permitted year-long anywhere within an area designated as “open” to OHV use...”

## **2.2 Alternative B: No Action**

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not approve CVTA's request to construct and maintain the *Juniper* and *Pinyon Loop Trails* by the CVTA. The need for the Project, to meet the public's increasing demand for non-motorized trails, would not be met.

## **2.2 Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Further Evaluation**

### *Carson Valley Discovery Trail*

In October 2010 the CVTA submitted to the BLM a proposal to construct and maintain a 45-mile non-motorized trail system. The proposal was used by the BLM for internal and public scoping in 2012. The proposal was revised in April 2013 and is included as the Proposed Action in Section 2.1.

For many years the CVTA has been active in constructing non-motorized trails on lands managed by the USFS and private landowners along the west and central portions of Carson Valley. Conceptually a loop system around the entire valley, connecting trails on BLM-managed lands on the east and USFS-managed lands on the west would create a more than 100-mile non-motorized trail system. To the north the trail system could have connected to trails on lands owned by the City of Carson. The alternative was dismissed for several reasons including: 1) the Pine Nut Mountains is a mixture of public and private ownership with few complete corridors consisting of only public lands; 2) implementation of the 45-mile trail system would have likely taken more than 10-years; and 3) some portions of the trail system had multiple crossings with motorized routes, making long-term maintenance of the non-motorized trail system difficult.

## 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### 3.1 Setting

The Project area is located within the urban interface of Carson Valley on the western edge of the Pine Nut Mountains. Elevations range from 5,100 feet above sea level (asl) to 5,400 feet asl for the Juniper Loop Trail, and 5,400 feet to 6,100 feet asl for the Pinyon Loop Trail. Major plant types in the Project area include annual grasses (*Poaceae* sp.), sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.) and pinyon-juniper woodlands (*Pinus monophylla*-*Juniperus osteosperma*).

#### 3.1.1 Resources Considered for Analysis

Appendix 1 of BLM's NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) identifies supplemental authorities that are subject to requirements specified by statute or executive order and must be considered in all BLM environmental documents (BLM 2008). Table 1 lists the Supplemental Authorities and their status in the Allotment. Supplemental authorities that may be affected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives are further described in this final EA.

**Table 1. Supplemental Authorities\***

Resource	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
Air Quality	Y	N	The Project area is not in a non-attainment area for pollutants. During trail construction there would be a negligible increase in particulates (dust), but this would not change the overall air quality status of the Project area.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	N		Resource not present.
Cultural Resources	N		A Class III cultural resources inventory was completed for this Project. No historic properties were identified (CCR 3-2663).
Environmental Justice	N		Resource not present.
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	N		Resource not present.
Floodplains	N		Resource not present.
Invasive, Non-native Species	Y	N	Invasive species are uncommon in the Project area. Best management practices would be incorporated into the Project design to minimize potential spread of invasive, non-native species. See Section 6.0 for monitoring of invasive, non-native species.
Migratory Birds	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Native American Religious Concerns	N		On June 24, 2013 the BLM sent a letter to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California on this Project. On August 13, 2013 the BLM met with the cultural representative for the Tribe and there were no issues raised concerning this Project.
Threatened or Endangered Species (animals)	N		Resource not present.
Threatened or Endangered Species (plants)	N		Resource not present.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	N		Resource not present.
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	Y	N	Best management practices would be incorporated into the Project to ensure that water quality is not affected.

Wetlands/Riparian Zones	N		Resource not present.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	N		Resource not present.
Wilderness/WSA	N		Resource not present.

*\*See H-1790-1 (January 2008) Appendix 1 Supplemental Authorities to be Considered.*

*Supplemental Authorities determined to be Not Present or Present/Not Affected need not be carried forward or discussed further in the document.*

*Supplemental Authorities determined to be Present/May Be Affected may be carried forward in the document.*

### 3.1.2 Resources or Uses Other Than Supplemental Authorities

BLM specialists have evaluated the potential impact of the Proposed Action or Alternatives on these resources and documented their findings Table 2. Resources or uses that may be affected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives are further described in this final EA (BLM 2008).

**Table 2. Resources or Uses Other Than Supplemental Authorities**

Resource or Issue**	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
BLM Sensitive Species (animals)	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
BLM Sensitive Species (plants)	Y	N	A botanical survey was conducted in May 2013; the final trail alignment would avoid known special status plants to the extent practicable.
Fire Management/Vegetation	N		Resource not present.
Forest Resources	Y	N	Although firewood cutting may occur in the Project area under BLM permitting, the Project would not limit access to public lands for this purpose.
General Wildlife	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Global Climate Change	Y	N	Although there is public and scientific debate about human contributions to climate change, no methodology exists to assess contributions of greenhouse gasses emitted from vehicles, to any impact to resources in the Project area.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Y	N	Under the Proposed Action there would be a negligible contribution of GHG from vehicle emissions; there is no methodology to calculate such contributions.
Land Use	Y	N	Two parcels involved with this Project have been identified in the 2001 CRMP for disposal (see Section 5.0).
Land Use Authorization	Y	N	A portion of the Pinyon Loop Trail would require an easement across private lands (Bently properties). This Project would have no effect on existing right-of-ways in the Project area.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	N		Pursuant to Sections 101, 201 and 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, a review of GIS spatial imagery was reviewed by the BLM. No LWCs were identified within the Project area.
Livestock Grazing	Y	N	Although the Buckeye Grazing Allotment overlaps the Project area, there would be no effect to grazing operations by the construction of the Project.
Minerals	N		Resource not present.
Paleontological	N		Resource not present.
Recreation	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Socioeconomics	Y	N	Implementing the Project may benefit Douglas County economically by providing a new recreational opportunity. The

			BLM is unable to evaluate any beneficial economic effect.
Soils	Y	N	Best management practices would be incorporated into the Project to ensure that soil erosion would not occur.
Travel Management	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Vegetation	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Visual Resources	Y	N	The Project area is within Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class IV, which allows for major change of the visual quality of the landscape. The trail features would be designed to minimize the visual contrast and would not be inconsistent with the VRM Classes.
Wild Horses and Burros	N		Resource not present. The Project area is adjacent to portions of the Pine Nuts Herd Management Area.

*\*\*Resources or uses determined to be Not Present or Present/Not Affected need not be carried forward or discussed further in the document.*

*Resources or uses determined to be Present/May Be Affected may be carried forward in the document.*

### 3.2 Recreation

The Project area is located within Carson Valley on the western edge of the Pine Nut Mountain Range. Carson Valley supports an urban interface population of about 47,000 residents that value the proximity of public lands to their communities. In addition to the local recreational community, public lands also attract destination-based or regional recreationists to the area.

Recreation opportunities within the Carson Valley urban interface are characterized as dispersed casual use. Aside from several established trailheads and basic signage, there are no highly developed recreation facilities. Recreational opportunities on public lands include OHV riding and touring, equestrian riding, mountain-biking, dog walking and hiking. Recreational use is generally denser within the urban interface than the backcountry of the Pine Nut Mountains. Subsequently, the potential for user conflict is typically greater within the urban interface.

Under 43 CFR 8364.1, the BLM would issue a restriction order for the two trailheads included in the Proposed Action. The trailheads would not be designed for staging for OHV's, nor would facilities be constructed to allow for overnight use. To ensure public safety while using the trailheads, target shooting would not be permitted. The restriction order would also limit use of these new trails to non-motorized uses (hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding). These recreational activities would continue to be permitted on BLM-managed lands elsewhere. This restriction order would not set a precedent for similar actions. A *Federal Register* notice would be published at the time the order would go into effect.

### 3.3 Travel Management

The current OHV designation for the project area is "Open." Motorized and non-motorized access to public lands within the Carson Valley urban interface is provided by a variety of road and trail types. Access roads within the urban interface range from paved to unimproved two-track. Trails are primarily user created single tracks used by pedestrians, equestrians, mountain bikes and motorcycles. The primary access to the Juniper Loop trailhead is Stephanie Way, a paved county road that ends approximately ½ mile west of the existing gravel staging area. The primary access to the Pinyon Loop Trailhead West would be Out-R-Way, a paved road. Trailhead East (preferred location) would be accessed by Pine Nut Road, a highly modified "two-lane" dirt road maintained by Douglas County.

Each of the proposed loop trails is crossed by existing single and two-track motorized routes, and routes driven by passenger vehicles. No change or improvements is necessary to the access roads, however the BLM may identify the need for directional signage along Pine Nut Road to the new trailhead. If deemed insufficient, additional signage may also be placed along Stephanie Way.

### **3.4 Migratory Birds, General Wildlife, BLM Sensitive Species (Animals)**

#### *Habitats*

Vegetative communities that provide wildlife habitat in the Project area are generally dominated by low- to moderate-growing shrubs interspersed with some native bunchgrasses and forbs. Pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and rock outcrops provide habitat for wildlife. The vegetation types in the Project area can structurally and functionally be combined into two major wildlife habitats: sagebrush and pinyon-juniper. The Project area is not located within Bi-State sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) preliminary priority habitat, and this species is not discussed further.

Sagebrush communities are important to a variety of wildlife, including sagebrush obligates. These are black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*), and loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). Additionally, these communities are important to other species that may be present during certain times of the year, such as mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*), and gray flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*).

Pinyon-juniper serves an important food source for the pinyon jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), Steller's jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*), western scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), and Clark's nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*). The primary game species within the Project area is mule deer. Other upland game species occurring in the Project area include California quail (*Callipepla californica*), chukar (*Alectoris chukar*), and band-tailed pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*).

### **3.5 Vegetation**

The Project area supports a diversity of vegetation communities that may be generalized into two categories: sagebrush and pinyon-juniper. These different vegetation communities are a result of elevation, moisture, soil substrate, aspect, and past land use practices.

The primary vegetative community found in the Project area is pinyon-juniper woodlands interspersed with sagebrush. Common shrubs in the Project area include desert peach (*Prunus andersonii*) and bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*).



## **4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes and compares the environmental consequences predicted to result from implementing the Proposed Action or Alternatives described in Chapter 2.0. The purpose of this chapter is to present the impact analysis of the alternatives and to disclose the impacts of the actions on affected resources by the Proposed Action or Alternatives.

The potential consequences or impacts of each alternative are addressed in the same order of resource topics in Chapter 3.0. This parallel organization allows readers to compare existing resource conditions (Chapter 3.0) with potential impacts (Chapter 4.0).

#### **4.1.1 Types of Effects**

This chapter describes the potential direct, indirect, and residual effects to resources that may result from the Proposed Action or Alternatives, as well as identifies the potential monitoring needs associated with the specific resources. In this document, the word “adverse” is used in characterizing minor (non-significant) detrimental effects to a resource, and “negligible” is used in characterizing minor (non-significant) detrimental effects to a resource that are generally undetectable. “Beneficial” effects would have a positive effect on the resource. In this document, the terms “effect” and “impact” are used synonymously.

### **4.2 Recreation**

#### ***Alternative A: Proposed Action***

Under the Proposed Action, two non-motorized loop trails and one trailhead would be designed to accommodate easy to moderate hiking and equestrian day use opportunities. Trail design and construction would also reflect public health and safety and overall maintenance needs. Although there are existing opportunities to hike, bike and ride on horseback within the urban interface, the unstructured experience is not the same when intermixed with motorized uses or follows user created, unmaintained routes that are often steep, rocky or rutted with no notable design features that take into account public health and safety and facility maintenance. Overall effects to non-motorized recreation are beneficial. Overall effects to motorized recreation are neutral.

Issuing a restriction order to prohibit OHV staging, overnight use and target shooting at the trailheads would have a negligible impact on those recreational uses as they are available elsewhere.

#### ***Alternative B: No Action***

Under the No Action Alternative the Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails would not be constructed. The need for non-motorized trails within the Pine Nut Mountains would not be met, a negligible effect. Motorized recreational opportunities would continue in the Project area under the current “Open” designation. Non-motorized uses would continue without the benefits of planned facilities that address public health and safety, and facility maintenance.

### **4.3 Travel Management**

#### ***Alternative A: Proposed Action***

Under the Proposed Action, the public would have access to the new non-motorized loop trails through one new trailhead and one existing trailhead, a beneficial effect. The Project would add approximately 12 miles of non-motorized, designated loop trails to the urban interface. The Project would not have an adverse effect on the existing motorized road or trail infrastructure.

#### ***Alternative B: No Action***

Under the No Action Alternative the Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails would not be constructed. The Pine Nut Mountains has an extensive network of routes, ranging from unmaintained single track trails to maintained dirt roads.

### **4.6 Migratory Birds, General Wildlife, BLM Sensitive Species (Animals)**

#### ***Alternative A: Proposed Action***

The Project would result in the permanent loss of approximately ½ acre of foraging habitat for migratory birds and BLM sensitive animal species. This habitat type is common and would not affect species regionally, minor displacement during trail construction may occur.

Under the Proposed Action, approximately ½ acre of wildlife habitat would be removed for construction of the loop trails and trailhead. Pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush communities are common, regional populations of wildlife would not be expected to change. During construction, wildlife present in the Project area may be temporarily displaced. Construction activities during the fall and winter would likely have little to no impact on wildlife. Use of the trails and trailhead by recreational users may cause displacement of wildlife, especially during the nesting or young-rearing season. Overall effects to wildlife are negligible.

#### ***Alternative B: No Action***

Under the No Action Alternative the Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails would not be constructed. There would be no impact to wildlife because the loop trails would not be constructed. Impacts to wildlife due to the existing recreational uses in the Project area would continue.

### **4.7 Vegetation**

#### ***Alternative A: Proposed Action***

Under the Proposed Action, approximately ½ acre of vegetation would be removed during construction of the trails and trailhead. Vegetative cover is low density due to soil conditions and low precipitation. Removal of trees would be avoided. Any grasses or shrubs that would be removed for construction of the trails or trailhead are common regionally. Overall effects to vegetation are negligible.

#### ***Alternative B: No Action***

Under the No Action Alternative the Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails would not be constructed. There would be no impact to vegetation because the loop trails would not be constructed. Impacts to vegetation due to the existing recreational uses in the Project area would continue.

#### **4.8 Residual Effects**

“Residual effects” are those adverse effects that remain after implementation of mitigation measures. No major adverse effects (aka significant effects per 43 CFR 1508.27) have been identified in this final EA. Measures have been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Action that would avoid or minimize adverse effects. No additional mitigation is necessary; there would be no residual effects.

## 5.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

A cumulative effect is defined under NEPA as “the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action, decision, or project when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other action.” “Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 CFR Part 1508.7). Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are analyzed to the extent that they are relevant and useful in analyzing whether the reasonably foreseeable effects of the Proposed Action or Alternatives may have an additive and significant relationship to those effects.

### Cumulative Effects Geographic Area.

The cumulative effects study area (CESA) for the Project is an area encompassing approximately 555 acres (a 200 foot buffer to each side from the centerline of the trails). The CESA boundary for individual resources may be artificial (administrative) or natural. Only those resources directly or indirectly affected by the Proposed Action and Alternatives are analyzed for cumulative effects.

### Timeframe for Effects Analysis.

Short-term cumulative effects would occur over a four-year period, the estimated time needed for trail and trailhead construction. Unless an unknown management action were to occur, long-term cumulative effects would be indefinite, the timeframe for use of the trail and trailhead.

### Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions.

#### Past and Present Actions.

Livestock grazing has likely been occurring in the CESA since the early 1900's and continues today under BLM permitting. The primary activities within the CESA are recreational, from target shooting, hunting, rock hounding, horseback riding, and use of OHVs. Each loop trail crosses single and two-track trails, and routes used by passenger vehicles. In the area adjacent to the Pinyon Loop Trailhead West and for the first 0.6 mile of the proposed trail, the BLM had completed the Bluebird Fuels Treatment Project in 2009. The objective was to reduce the fuel load within the wildland urban interface by thinning of pinyon-juniper. In 2005 the BLM completed a thinning project at the proposed Pinyon Loop Trailhead East location.

In the CRMP, the BLM has identified several parcels in the CESA for disposal (transfer out of public ownership through direct sale or other means). A 650-acre parcel including the gravel portion of Stephanie Way, the existing staging area, and first 0.3 mile of the Juniper Loop Trail were identified for disposal. Along the Pinyon Loop Trail there is a 156-acre parcel identified for disposal that includes the Trailhead West, and the first 1½ miles of the trail from trailhead west. Also under the CRMP the CESA is designated “open” for travel management (CRMP 2001). Under this designation, motorized vehicle travel is permitted year-long anywhere.

#### Reasonably Foreseeable Actions.

Livestock grazing and a wide range of recreational activities are likely to continue in the future in the CESA. The BLM is proposing in the Pine Nut Land Health Project to maintain the previous fuels reduction efforts in the vicinity of the Pinyon Loop Trailhead West and East

locations. The CRMP is currently undergoing revision; the BLM may retain “disposal” status for several parcels in the CESA or change the status to “retention.” A decision on the revised Resource Management Plan (RMP) is not anticipated until at least 2016. The current designation for travel management in the CESA is “open” to motorized use. Vehicle travel is permitted year-long anywhere. The RMP may change the travel management of the CESA in the future. After a decision is issued on the RMP, the BLM would likely issue a decision on a separate Travel Management Plan, which would likely permanently designate the two trails included in the Proposed Action as non-motorized.

### Effects Analysis.

#### *Recreation*

Considering past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions, under the Proposed Action, constructing and maintaining two non-motorized loop trails and a new trailhead would be cumulatively beneficial.

Under the No Action Alternative, no non-motorized trails would be constructed; there would be no cumulative effect to recreation. On-going recreational uses in the CESA would continue; a neutral cumulative effect.

#### *Travel Management*

Considering past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions under the Proposed Action, existing roads that access two trailheads would be cumulatively beneficial.

Under the No Action Alternative, no trailheads would be accessed for use of non-motorized loop trails; there would be no cumulative effect to travel management. On-going recreational uses in the CESA would continue, there would be no cumulative effect because there would be no need to change access into the Project area.

#### *Migratory Birds, General Wildlife, BLM Sensitive Species (Animals)*

Considering past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions, under the Proposed Action, constructing and maintaining two non-motorized loop trails and a new trailhead would be cumulatively negligible to wildlife.

Under the No Action Alternative, no non-motorized trails would be constructed; there would be no cumulative effect to wildlife. On-going recreational uses in the CESA would continue; a negligible cumulative effect.

#### *Vegetation*

Considering past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions, under the Proposed Action, constructing and maintaining two non-motorized loop trails and a new trailhead would be cumulatively adverse to vegetative resources.

Under the No Action Alternative, no non-motorized trails would be constructed; there would be no cumulative effect. On-going recreational uses in the CESA would continue; a negligible cumulative effect to vegetative resources.

## **6.0 MONITORING**

The BLM would be conducted during and after Project implementation. Monitoring would consist of the following:

- Identify invasive, non-native plant species for subsequent treatment under a separate authorization. Vehicles and feed for horses have a low potential to introduce non-native, invasive species into the Project area. When identified, species may be removed by hand or by application of herbicides.
- Unauthorized use of the loop trails by motorized vehicles. On-going motorized uses occur throughout the Project area. Although a restriction order would be in place establishing that the loop trails are for non-motorized use, motorized use may occasionally occur. The BLM and CVTA would enter into a long-term agreement to manage the loop trails, and adaptive measures may be initiated to deter motorized use, in the event that would occur.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

### **7.1 Public Review and Comment**

The draft EA was made available for public review for 30-days from August 1 until August 30, 2013. Letters were sent to the Project mailing list which consisted of 124 residents adjacent to the Project area. Notification was also made to the Nevada State Clearinghouse and to the media via a press release. On August 20, 2013 an article on the Project was published in *The Record-Courier*. On August 21, 2013 the BLM conducted a public workshop at the Carson City District Office. Twelve people attended the workshop. The BLM received four written comments. None of the comments resulted in substantive changes to the analysis or alternatives contained in the draft EA.

### **7.2 Individuals, Tribes, Organizations and Agencies Consulted**

#### **7.2.1 Individuals**

Alexakos, Steven & Theresa  
Ambrose, Jim  
Allen, Roger & Judy  
Andrews, Dennis & Sherry  
Arett, Laurel  
Bacon, Russ  
Ballou, Robert  
Baker, Gerald & Karen  
Barnes, Bert & Sheron  
Beamer, Bruce & Kathy  
Beekhof, Cornelius  
Boyson, John  
Brandt, Douglas & Wendy  
Brazenu, Paul  
Brueckner, Allen & Cherylene  
Carlson, Anita  
Capone, Peidre  
Carrillo, Joseph  
Chaney, Michael & Dawn  
Cobourn, John  
Crockett, Brian & Ronda  
Cubin, Mark & Sue  
Daniels, John & Bette  
Davis, June  
DeLaney, Nathan  
Demele, Frederick & Loretta  
Degenhart, Tyson  
Dicks, John & Karin  
Dion, Darrell  
Doell, Carol  
Doherty, Michael

Downs, Scott & Brenda  
Durand, William & Ruth  
Dyer, Ella  
Florence, Gerald & Jacqueline  
Foster, Marie  
Funk, Christian & Katherine  
Gamble, David  
Garcia, Stephen & Nancy  
Garic, Mark & Cecelia  
Gilbert, Maurice & Lois  
Gleave, John & Caren  
Goode, Gilbert & Karen  
Guidotti, Ronald  
Haitt, Jane  
Harmon, Jerry  
Hawchack, David  
Helmer, John  
Hill, Patty & Doug  
Huff, Barry & Suzanne  
Jewkes, David & Judy  
Joncey, Bill & Sandy  
Johnson, Celia  
Jory, LaVerne  
Kashuba, James & Jennifer  
Kallman, Keith  
Kazen, James & Yvonne  
Kiefer, Dicter  
Kirchner, Michael & Karen  
Kuckenmeister, Mary & Mike  
Kuse, Annette  
Lauritsen, Marta  
Leman, Peter & Jumuna  
Lettlebeaver, Regina  
Littrell, Nathan  
Longstreet, Daryl & Brown  
Mackenvie, Mary & Howard  
Macswen, John  
Maher, Donna  
Mayfield, Joe  
Mayo, Eddie & Helzer  
Maxwell, Malcom  
McCabe, Kathryn  
McGuire, Donald & Linda  
McNeilly, Clyde  
Mileo, Kim  
Moglich, Mark & Susie



Morissette, Richard & Carol  
Moxley, Diana Sue  
Newburgh, Henry & Jay  
Oberg, Bob  
Parrott, Stephen  
Peck, Laura & Shep  
Potosky, John & Debra  
Prescott, Tom  
Prince, Chas  
Rau, Raymond & Wes  
Raycraft, Homer  
Reid, John  
Rice, Michael & Deborah  
Ross, Cameron  
Ross, John  
Schwartz, Daniel & Irene  
Schmid, Patrick  
Scilingo, Earl & Kinda  
Sibley, Ki  
Skaggs, Rachel  
Sprott, Neal & Deborah  
Staell, Candace  
Steinbacher, Paul  
Stoll, Mary  
Suminski, Rita  
Sutor, Edward & Terese  
Tahti, Thane  
Thompson, Lemeul & Jennie  
Trolson, Brad & Nancy  
Uhart, Loran & Carol  
Van Dyk, Frits & Kathleen  
Villalobos, Miguel  
Wahabzada, Shawall & Fristha  
Walsh, Gretchen  
Wendling, Mike  
Williams, Frank  
Wing, Dana & Maria  
Wire, Jack & Evva  
Woelfel, Rob  
Wright, Charles & Barbara  
Wright, Matt  
Youngdahl, Peter & Roberta

### **7.2.2 Tribes**

Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada

### 7.2.3 Agencies

Multiple State through the Nevada State Clearinghouse

### 7.3 List of Preparers

BLM staff that contributed to this document:

Name	Resource
Brian Buttazoni	NEPA Compliance
Rachel Crews	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns
Arthur Callan	Recreation, Travel Management

CVTA staff that contributed to this document:

Name	Resource
Jeremy Vlcan	Director of Trail Operations

## 8.0 REFERENCES

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\_\_\_\_\_. 2008. *BLM National Environmental Policy Act Handbook* (H-1790-1). U.S. Department of the Interior. January.